



African Diaspora Forum

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**To : Honourable Cyril Ramaphosa
President of the Republic of South Africa
Union Buildings, Government Avenue, Pretoria**

09 August 2019

**Re: Open Letter: ADF Pleads With South African Government to
Declare a State of Emergency**

His Honourable Ramaphosa,

We wish to alert your office and to request that you make a pronouncement on the development of an atmosphere of xenophobia and hatred in the country.

For more than a month now attacks on migrants have been carried out and gradually intensifies and is reaching alarming proportions. Toward the end of July 2019 a complaint against crime allegedly committed by swahili-speaking foreign migrants in Richards Bay degenerated and shops belonging to the latter were looted. The victims are still unable to return to their places of work and business and their children unable to attend schools. The situation was not properly handled and two weeks later a strike by truck drivers worsened the situation in the same city.

In an unrelated incident, police in Johannesburg CBD attempted to seize "counterfeit goods" and met stern resistance from foreign shopkeepers. Social media and both local and international electronic media were abuzz with shocking news of how the police was overpowered, prevented from working and retreated from the area. Calls were made to defend the police and defend the sovereignty of the state and thus the stage was set for widespread and indiscriminate attacks on foreign businesses across the country.

Shortly after those calls foreign-owned shops were looted in Soweto as a retaliatory tactic to defend the police. About 1300 shops were affected in the area. Attacks continued in Pretoria CBD following the shooting and killing of a taxi driver allegedly by a "drug lord". The taxi industry in Pretoria had called for a strike against migrants' and drug dealers and all shops in Pretoria belonging to foreign nationals were looted on that day



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and attacks continued the following day in neighbouring Sunnyside area. There, mobs of attackers had a standoff with foreign shop owners and police stood in between after a few shops had been vandalised.

In Johannesburg attacks moved to Jeppestown, Malvern and Primrose and a number of migrants who are car dealers saw their businesses set alight and property worth several millions of rands were totally and irretrievably destroyed.

In the East Rand area more than 800 people are being sheltered at nearby community halls. Elsewhere attacks happened in the Western Cape townships around the city of Cape Town.

As the world watched live what was taking place, it was expected that the South African government would present a strong response to the crisis but there was little reaction from the security forces. At times people in other countries felt that the South African authorities condone the violence as it continued unabated. Several African leaders and governments reacted and took warning actions against South Africa and it was hoped that the South African government will act decisively to stop the violence.

We are dismayed that the violence continues and seems to be increasing. We are horrified that meetings called to quell the hostilities are instead turned into galvanising rallies to attack migrants systematically and in more organised ways. Even petrol bombs are now being used as was it noticed in the attack on a mosque on Nugget street in Johannesburg as the mobsters were marching toward Hillbrow accompanied by the police. Many of the victims are from war torn countries and are watching in disbelief what is unfolding before their eyes. They can see that attacks are carefully coordinated and target foreign owned businesses. The aim is to destroy any means of survival for the victims.

We are reporting that in Richards Bay foreign nationals have stayed indoors for the past 45 days and their food supplies have now run out. They are now pleading for assistance in hunger and are fearful since they seem to have been left at the mercy of attackers.



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In the midst of the chaos we have concordant reports that more than 10 people were killed during the attacks. Foreign nationals fear that next, as it was done in Kathlehong, will be attacks on home and blocs of flats where migrants are in large concentration in places like Hillbrow, Berea, Yeoville, Johannesburg CBD, Mayfair, Pretoria CBD, Sunnyside, Germiston, Cape Town and other places.

We fear that large scale attacks of genocide-like proportions will take place. Anonymous audio and written messages in English and vernacular South African languages have been widely circulated calling for general and countrywide attacks on foreign nationals starting on 09 September 2019. In the middle of this trauma created in the migrants' community, the police is not protecting them, instead, they are systematically arrested. We can clearly see what was happening in South Africa before 1994. This time directed to the migrants' community. Women and children are living in fear in a democratic country. We have the sentiment that there is no political will to find a long lasting solution about the attacks on migrants which started in 2008. We are worried about this situation. It is time that the South African government tells the world what is the plan to stop the violence. Interventions made so far in 2008, 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2019 have been inadequate. We are asking the SA government to open a channel of communication around those issues. But for engagements to happen there must be calmness. The violence must stop.

We therefore are calling on the SA government to declare a state of emergency and create conditions to bring in the army and stop the violence.

Kind Regards,

Mr Marc Gbaffou

Founder, ADF